Summary feature streamlines system

If you waste a lot of time searching through old WordPerfect files trying to find a particular one, maybe you should start using the Document Summary feature. This electronic version of Post-It Notes stores pertinent information about a document so you can search for it easily at a later time.

WordPerfect version 5.0 has so many features that most users aren't even aware of many of it's helpful services.

The Document Summary lets you attach descriptive information to any WordPerfect document. Here are the categories you can fill in within a Document Summary:

■ Descriptive File Name. You can improve on the cryptic 11-character DOS file name by entering up to 39 characters, including spaces between words. Macintosh users — who've always been able to write sentence-long file names — will get a chuckle out of this feature. But in the DOS world such luxuries are hard to come by.

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■ Subject/Account. The idea here is to enter key words that you might want to search for later on. The Word Search feature of List Files is, as I'll discuss, a big part of the usefulness of the Document Summary.

■ Author. One or more names can be entered. Not only does this establish authorship, it also becomes another criterion for that search function. If your computer is used by a lot of people, think how neat it would be to cull all the documents written by any given person.

■ Typist. Typists and secretaries deserve credit, too. This entry would also be handy if your assistant needed to search for documents he or she had worked on.

Okay, now that it's evident how slick the Document Summary feature is, here's how to use it.

First, access this feature by pressing the format key, then "D" for document, and "S" for summary. Then fill in the blanks.

Another way is to change the initial settings of WordPerfect so that the Document Summary screen always appears when you save a file.

Whenever you want to quickly look at Document Summaries for various files, just highlight the file in the directory and press the Enter key. The document summary will instantly appear on the screen. Enter again returns you to the List Files directory.

You can do this repeatedly, with ease, whenever you're scanning a list of file names.

Finally, you can search for key words in the Document Summaries as well. Just key in Word Search at the bottom of the List Files screen and follow the prompts.

I wish it was a little easier to scan all the Document Summaries in a given directory. I would like to see a feature that, when turned on, would display the Document Summary anytime a file was highlighted in the directory.

Also, it would be helpful if there was a little symbol in the List Files directory showing which files had Document Summaries attached. But until WordPerfect Corp. gets around to taking my suggestions, it still works just fine.

■ The bottom line: The Document Summary allows you — or someone else — to quickly locate a WordPerfect file and figure out its contents. If many people use WordPerfect in your office, you may want to make it an office policy that all documents should include the summary. It will improve everyone's productivity.

For more information, contact WordPerfect Corp., 1555 N. Technology Way, Orem, Utah 84057.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity.